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EPA/TCEQ: Updated status of systems affected by Harvey

WASHINGTON (September 11, 2017) — The EPA has 198 personnel supporting the response efforts for Hurricane Harvey and have established a Unified Command with other state and federal partners, and are in the field conducting work. Working together, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality continue to coordinate with local, state and federal officials to address the human health and environmental impacts of Hurricane Harvey and its aftermath, especially the water systems in the affected areas. The TCEQ has approximately 500 people assisting in response to this natural disaster

As part of this coordination, a Unified Command was established between the EPA, the TCEQ, the General Land Office,

and the U.S. Coast Guard to oversee all emergency response efforts. This Unified Command is supported by three operational branches in Corpus Christi, Houston, and Port Arthur. In addition to the EPA, the TCEQ, the GLO, and the USCG, multiple agencies and groups are supporting each of the operational branches, including the Texas National Guard, 6th Civil Support Team; the Arkansas National Guard, 61st Civil Support Team; the Oklahoma Task Force 1; and the Texas State Guard Engineering Group. Branch personnel are working to continuously monitor water and wastewater systems, as well as assess spills or discharges as a result of the storm.

As of Monday, Sept. 11, the following information is available:

Drinking Water: To date, about 2,238 drinking water systems have been affected by Harvey. Of those: 2,014 systems are fully operational, 136 have boil-water notices, and 35 are shut down. Both the EPA and the TCEQ are contacting remaining systems to gather updated information of their status. Assistance teams are in the field working directly with system operators to expedite getting systems back to operational status.

Wastewater and Sewage: The TCEQ has made contact with 1,219 wastewater treatment plants in the 58 counties within the Governor's Disaster Declaration. Of those, 35 are inoperable in the affected counties. The agencies are aware that releases of wastewater from sanitary sewers are occurring as a result of the historic flooding and are actively working to monitor facilities that have reported spills. Additionally, the agencies are conducting outreach and providing technical guidance to all other wastewater facilities in flood-impacted areas. Assistance teams will continue to be deployed to work directly with system operators to expedite getting systems back to operational status.

Flood Water: Water quality sampling will be focused on industrial facilities and hazardous waste sites. Floodwaters contain many hazards, including bacteria and other contaminants. Precautions should be taken by anyone involved in cleanup activities or any others who may be exposed to flood waters. These precautions include heeding all warnings from local and state authorities regarding safety advisories. In addition to the drowning hazards of wading, swimming, or driving in swift floodwaters, these waters can carry large objects that are not always readily visible that can cause injuries to those in the water. Other potential hazards include downed power lines and possible injuries inflicted by animals displaced by the floodwaters.

Critical Water Infrastructure: The TCEQ has made contact with the owners of the 340 dams in the impacted areas. There are 15 dams that have reported some type of damage. There have been no reports of downstream damage or loss of life. The TCEQ will be meeting with affected dam owners in the next week.

Additional EPA/TCEQ updates include:

Superfund Sites: The EPA and the TCEQ continue to get updates about the status of specific sites from the parties responsible for ongoing cleanup of the sites. The TCEQ has completed the assessment of all 17 state Superfund sites in the affected area. There were no major issues noted. The TCEQ will continue to monitor sites to ensure no further action is needed in regards to the storm.

The EPA completed site assessments at all 43 Superfund sites affected by the storm. Of these sites, two (San Jacinto and U.S. Oil Recovery) require additional assessment efforts. Work continues at both the San Jacinto Waste Pits and U.S. Oil Recovery Superfund sites. The EPA has directed potential responsible parties or has independently started collecting samples at the 43 Superfund sites to further confirm any impacts from the storm. Sampling efforts of all Texas sites are expected to be completed this week with sample results available soon. Sampling of Louisiana sites will begin within the next two weeks.

Debris Management: The TCEQ has approved 118 Temporary Debris Management Sites in areas under the Federal or State Disaster Declaration designations. TCEQ regional offices and local authorities are actively overseeing the siting and implementation of debris and waste management plans in the affected area. View a map of all Temporary Debris Management Sites [Exit the TCEQ](#).

Reconnaissance/Orphan Containers: The TCEQ continues to lead in monitoring facilities that have reported spills. Orphan containers, which include drums and tanks, found floating in or washed up near waterways continue to be gathered, sorted and grouped by type, prior to shipping them off for safe, proper treatment and disposal. Reconnaissance and assessment of facilities and vessels are being conducted to identify any leaks or spills and responded to accordingly. The Unified Command is also working to ensure the disposal of oil and hazardous materials is conducted properly.

Air Quality Monitoring: One of the many preparations for Hurricane Harvey included the EPA, the TCEQ, and other monitoring entities temporarily shutting down several air monitoring stations from the greater Houston, Corpus Christi, and Beaumont areas to protect valuable equipment from storm damage. Since then, state and local authorities have been working to get the systems up and running again as soon as possible. As of Monday, Sept. 11, the TCEQ's air monitoring network is operational 100 percent in Corpus Christi, 96 percent in Houston, and 86 percent in Beaumont. The network is expected to be fully operational again by the end of this week. Of the available air monitoring data collected from Aug. 24 through Sept. 10, all measured concentrations were well below levels of health concern. The EPA is conducting air monitoring using the TAGA mobile air monitoring bus in southeast Houston neighborhoods nearest industrial sources and data reports are available online at www.epa.gov/hurricane-harvey [Exit the TCEQ](#).

Refineries/Fuel Waivers: In addition to gasoline waivers for 38 states and D.C., and diesel waivers for Texas, the EPA signed three No Action Assurance letters on Sept. 1 to help address fuel shortages. NAA will help expedite the distribution of existing gasoline supplies to both Texas and Louisiana, while the refineries work to re-start and resume normal operations. The diesel waivers and NAA letters are effective until Sept. 15 and should allow for the distribution of fuel to consumers in Texas. The EPA recently reissued the gasoline waivers for the maximum time allowed under the Clean Air Act through Sept. 26, and the TCEQ will work with the EPA to extend these waivers through Oct. 1. The TCEQ is currently evaluating whether the NAA letters and diesel waivers need to be reissued and has discussed possible

reissuance with the EPA.

Arkema Plant Fire Update: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has completed its response support to the Crosby Volunteer Fire Department and the Harris County Fire Marshal's Office for the catastrophic event at Arkema. A copy of EPA press release and summary information is available at <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/arkema-update>.



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